

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

SUNDAY DECEMBER 8 2024

KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

“Come and Find the Quiet Center”

Based on Malachi 3:1-4

While scrolling the news feed on my phone this week, I came across an article featuring a new and controversial model of moving the homeless off the streets in major cities. It is based on the premise of housing first, addiction second.

The article went on to profile a woman who after some time of not having to sleep with one eye open for fear of being robbed, stabbed or raped, in combination with three hot meals a day, had come to the decision to begin to work on herself and her addiction. What surprised me in all this, was that the first step of her addiction recovery process was a Gratitude Journal. Not chemical therapy or counselling, but gratitude. The woman claimed that more than anything else, the gratitude exercise that started her day that was having the greatest impact on her recovery.

- In the midst of an obviously complicated

life story, filled with rabbit trails that would make our hair curl and our eyebrows raise;

- In all that she had lost over the journey;
- In a lifestyle situation that is far different than how you or I comfortably move through our day;

For all that is difficult about this story, it was gratitude that was carrying this woman to her future.

That is the duality of the candles we have lit here today. We light them with a sense of loss, but with a certainty of gratitude for the time we had; the things we learned, the laughter, the adventure, the friendship. And in between these two dualities: loss and gratitude, there is the flame.

But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. (Malachi 3:2-3)

To be that shining light of gold or silver, the ore has to

be bent, twisted, and seared in the fire. For us to a shining light, like gold or silver, we have to be bent, twisted, and seared in the fire that is life.

- Between the tension of loss and gratitude is where you will find the passion to continue.
- Between the tension of loss and gratitude is where you will find the patience to wait, to listen, to rest.
- Between the tension of loss and gratitude is where you will find the peace you seek this day.

And by remembering how the loss has:

- Bent you
- Twisted you
- Changed you

Can you then remember with quiet gratitude the love shared and the light that shine within you because of that person, that pet, that dream.

In that moment, there is peace.

There is a moment where you realize that you can rest in the tension between loss and gratitude because Christ

holds you gently there so you
do not stumble or fall or
collapse because you cannot
take any more.

This Christmas, as you look
upon the star above
Bethlehem, remember the fire
that burns within that star to
make it shine. It is the same
fire of faith that burns within
you.

It is okay to remember.

It is okay to grieve what
has been lost.

It is okay to smile through
the tears.

Reach for gratitude.

And remember.

Amen.